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TRA DIRECTOR PROMOTES FEDERAL ANTI-CALLER ID ‘SPOOFING’ MEASURE

WASHINGTON – Nearly one in seven complaints to Tennessee’s Do-Not-Call Registry involves false Caller ID information, but federal legislation would prohibit the use of misleading or inaccurate information, Tennessee Regulatory Authority Director Ron Jones told a Senate committee today.

Criminals who use false information, available for as little as \$10, are difficult to track as they commit “fraud and steal the identities of hard-working, law-abiding Americans,” Jones testified before the Senate Commerce, Science and Technology Committee, which is considering the Truth in Caller ID Act of 2007.

Jones appeared before the committee in his role as chairman of the Consumer Affairs Committee of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), which has adopted a resolution opposing caller ID “spoofing.”

“The resolution was adopted in response to growing consumer complaints concerning the practice of caller ID spoofing and notes the important role state PUCs (public utility commissions) play in policing such activities,” Jones said.

Spoofing often is used as a tool in identity theft of innocent consumers or in diverting public safety resources away from real emergencies. Terrorists also could use fake caller ID numbers to mask their location, he said.

Jones said the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, which maintains the state’s Do-Not-Call Registry, has been unable to fully investigate 42 Do-Not-Call complaints this year because of fake caller ID information. The 42 calls represent 14 percent of the TRA’s Do-Not-Call complaints received in 2007.

NARUC supports the anti-spoofing legislation but wants Congress to remove a section that would limit state action while federal enforcement action is pending.

“Consumer protection is a core competency of state commissions,” Jones said. “States should not be encumbered from investigation and enforcement of violations of state law.”

The TRA’s mission is to promote the public interest by balancing the interests of utility consumers and providers. For more information on the TRA, visit online at www.state.tn.us/tra.

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